

## **COALITION RESPONSE TO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

### **Western Sydney Airport**

The Coalition is building a rail ready Western Sydney Airport that will be a catalyst for the growth and prosperity of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

We are partnering with the NSW and Local Governments in a City Deal for Western Sydney, to coordinate across Government integrated planning and targeted investment. The three levels of Government will together develop a vision for Western Sydney and agree on goals, actions and investment, leveraging our shared investment in the airport and supporting infrastructure.

A new airport for Western Sydney will deliver the people of Western Sydney:

- access to world class infrastructure connecting the region to the world;
- more jobs locally; and
- greater economic activity and opportunity.

Western Sydney Airport, due to open in the mid-2020s, will bring with it new opportunities for residents of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. By the early 2030s, it is expected to provide nearly 9,000 direct jobs. By the early 2060s, this will increase to over 60,000 direct jobs.

To ensure good ground transport connections to Western Sydney Airport, we have announced a \$3.6 billion package of major road upgrades under the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan.

We have also commenced a rail scoping study assessing rail transport needs for Western Sydney, including the future airport. This will accelerate the benefits of the airport to the broader region.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was issued in 2015, and some 5,000 responses were received. The final EIS is now being developed for submission to the Minister for the Environment in the second half of this year. We have listened carefully to the views of Western Sydney and Blue Mountains residents received through the extensive public consultation process.

The Turnbull Government has determined, based on community feedback received to date, that the single merge point over Blaxland as illustrated in the draft EIS will not be part of the airspace plans for a Western Sydney Airport.

### **Blue Mountains Environmental Management and World Heritage Status**

The Blue Mountains are valued by many Australians, for its unique plants, animals, rugged tablelands, sheer cliffs, deep, inaccessible valleys and swamps. The Greater Blue Mountains was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000 and the National Heritage List in 2007.

The Coalition strongly supports protecting Australia's World Heritage sites through our State and Federal environmental laws, which are stringent by world standards.

The Coalition has continued to protect the environment and implement reforms that maintain our world class environmental standards. We have implemented a One-Stop Shop for environmental assessments, with bilateral agreements in place and operating in all States and Territories. These agreements are reducing duplication in environmental assessments and improving regulatory efficiency, all while maintaining and in some cases improving our already high environmental standards.

## **Mining**

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is already well protected by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the Act). This Act ensures that any action, including mining, that may have a significant impact on the World Heritage values of the site, must be referred to the Commonwealth for assessment.

All onshore resource projects, including coal projects, are subject to both Federal and State-based approvals, including under our stringent environmental protection regime. As part of these approvals, potential impacts on water are specifically considered by the Australian Government in accordance with the Act.

The Coalition Government is spending over \$98 million to improve information on water through the Bioregional Assessment project and other research. Bioregional Assessments are being conducted in 13 regions across the country including Namoi and Sydney Basin.

The Turnbull Government has proposed legislative amendments that would expand the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mines (IESC). To date, this legislation has been blocked in the Senate by Labor and the Greens.

The Coalition does not support setting a timetable for phasing out coal mining in Australia.

Australia's coal industry contributes about \$38 billion per annum in export income and is estimated to employ over 40,000 Australians.

Australia's oil and gas industry makes an important contribution to our economy. In 2014-15, the industry contributed around \$31 billion to industry gross value added and employed around 24,000 people.

The Coalition's Plan for a Strong New Economy will provide growth, jobs and a secure future for all Australians. This plan includes an innovation and science programme to help young Australians access the jobs of the future, a defence industry plan that will create thousands of new hi-tech jobs

around Australia and export trade agreements to allow farmers and Australian small businesses to benefit from new markets for their products and take on new staff.

### **Fossil Fuel Subsidies**

The Coalition Government does not provide subsidies for the production of fossil fuels or subsidies that encourage the inefficient or wasteful consumption of fossil fuels.

The Fuel Tax Credit – often mistaken for a subsidy – is based on an economy-wide tax offsets principle that applies to all business inputs. This principle has been used in Australia for many decades, for example tax credits are also given to businesses for any GST they pay on inputs.

The Treasury, the Productivity Commission and Bill Shorten all agree that fuel tax credits are not subsidies.

### **Climate Change**

Australia is playing its part in the global challenge of responding to climate change domestically and internationally.

Australia has a strong track record of meeting its emissions reduction commitments.

We are on track to meet and beat Australia's 2020 emissions reduction target of five per cent below 2000 levels by 78 million tonnes.

At last year's Paris climate change conference, the Coalition Government committed to reduce emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This is a strong, ambitious and responsible target, and is in step with the actions of major developed countries. It will see Australia's emissions per person halve and the emissions intensity of our economy reduce by two-thirds. These are among the biggest reductions among major economies internationally.

Australia played an active and important role in shaping the Paris Agreement. We were among over 170 Parties to sign the agreement in April 2016. A re-elected Turnbull Government will seek to ratify the Paris Agreement this year.

Australia's strong track record on climate change means we are well-placed to contribute towards the Paris Agreement's long-term goals to hold global temperatures well below two degrees Celsius, and to achieve global net-zero emissions in the second half of the century.

Labor's only solution is to re-introduce a carbon tax which will increase electricity prices and cost jobs. Based on Labor's own modelling when they were last in Government, their new target would lead to a 78 per cent increase in wholesale electricity prices.

Australian families can't afford it.

## **Renewable Energy**

Only the Turnbull Coalition team has an ambitious, responsible plan for renewable energy. The Coalition's renewable energy policies will ensure 23.5 per cent of Australia's electricity comes from renewable sources by 2020. This will see a doubling of large scale renewable projects.

The Government is continuing to help households install rooftop solar panels and solar hot water systems through rebates under the Renewable Energy Target. So far, more than 2.5 million households and businesses have solar systems. Australia has the world's highest penetration rate of solar PV on household roofs—15 per cent. This is more than double the next highest.

The Government has established a \$1 billion Clean Energy Innovation Fund, which will help emerging clean energy technologies make the leap from demonstration to commercial deployment.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) are driving innovation in clean energy technologies and creating the jobs of the future, including a \$350 million solar programme.

At the local level, we are also helping community organisations go solar through our Solar Communities commitment. This will help hundreds of local community organisations make the switch to solar, such as local sporting clubs, scout halls and community centres.

Importantly, the Coalition reinvigorated the Renewable Energy Target by fixing the mess left by Labor. When the Coalition was elected in 2013, the Renewable Energy Target was headed for failure. The constant and ad-hoc policy changes introduced by the previous Labor Government created a huge bank of phantom Renewable Energy Certificates. This was undermining investment in renewable energy.

Labor also gave the brown coal power stations \$5.5 billion, no strings attached.

Labor does not have a plan to achieve its new renewable energy target, nor has Labor estimated the costs. External cost estimates for Labor's target by 2030 vary between \$48 billion and \$85 billion depending on assumptions about network and transmissions upgrades. It is clear this is a very significant cost that would be borne by Australian families, pensioners and businesses.

## **Climate Science**

In the 2016–17 Budget, the Turnbull Government is providing record funding of \$3.3 billion to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) over four years.

The CSIRO is an independent statutory agency governed by a board of directors. The Board, in conjunction with senior management, are responsible for operations and staffing.

Labor is threatening an unprecedented attack on the independence of Australia's national science organisation, a body governed and run by experts who are best placed to independently determine the organisation's research priorities.

Let's not forget that in 2008, Labor cut \$63.4 million from CSIRO over four years. As a direct result of Labor's actions, CSIRO were forced to shut down locations and sack staff.

CSIRO will continue to employ more than 300 scientists working on climate research and will also ensure Australia has access to state of the art climate models to understand our changing climate and inform adaptation and mitigation decisions.

The CSIRO will also set up a Climate Science Centre in Hobart, focusing on climate modelling and projections for Australia, drawing on both national and international research expertise.

In addition, the Turnbull Government provided a nearly \$2.2 billion investment in Australia's Antarctic operations, including a new icebreaker. Investing in Australia's Antarctic operations is crucial to support Australia's scientific work on the Southern Ocean and on the ice, including the quest to find a million year ice core which will have important implications for climate science.

The Coalition Government also provided \$9 million in funding for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) in the 2014-15 Budget. NCCARF supports councils prepare for and manage the risks of climate change and sea-level rise with practical, hands-on tools and information.

The Coalition has also created an Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub under the \$145 million National Environmental Science Programme. The Hub will improve understanding of coastal and climate processes. It will provide coastal planners, developers and decision-makers with the information they need to minimise risks now and in the future and respond to the unavoidable impacts.

### **Tax Deductibility of Environmental Organisations**

The Report for the Inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations by the House of Representatives Environment Committee was tabled on 4 May 2016.

A re-elected Turnbull Government will consider the recommendations of the Committee and provide a response in due course.